



**STATE OF WASHINGTON**  
**WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH**  
**1102 SE Quince Street • PO Box 47990**  
**Olympia, Washington 98504-7990**

September 8, 2004

**TO:** Washington State Board of Health Members  
**FROM:** Charles Chu, WSBOH Member  
**RE:** **FOOD, FITNESS AND OUR KIDS COMMUNITY FORUM REPORT**

**Background and Summary**

In 2003, the Washington State Board of Health (SBOH) set its School Physical Activity and Nutrition Initiative in motion. This was in response to the epidemic levels of childhood obesity in our state and its attendant risks. Overweight children are at higher risk for developing severe long-term health problems, and are affected by discrimination, psychological stress and low self-esteem. Research indicates that obesity and subsequent diseases are largely preventable through proper diet and regular physical activity. In addition, children who eat well-balanced meals and are healthy are more likely to learn in the classroom. We also know that as a center point in children's lives, schools are uniquely positioned to enhance learning by promoting and supporting these healthy behaviors.

In response to these findings, the Board held a pilot forum at its October 15, 2003 meeting in Yakima. It invited local school board members and Yakima Health District Board members to hear presentations on best practices and to discuss ways schools could begin to address this epidemic.

Knowing that the community forum project would be most effectively planned and supported by a partnership of key organizations, we established an advisory committee made up of a number of organizations including the Washington State School Directors' Association, the Department of Health, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, the UW Center for Public Health Nutrition, the Washington State Parent Teacher Association, the Washington School Food Service Association and local health jurisdictions in five counties (Benton-Franklin, Clark, Island, King, and Pierce).

The advisory community met in February and began to plan a series of community forums for education and health professionals. These forums are designed to provide an opportunity to discuss the far-reaching consequences of children's inactivity and poor nutrition and to explore ways schools can help address this problem. Ultimately, we would like schools to adopt policies and practices that make it easier for children to choose health-promoting foods, be physically active, and be ready to learn at school.

During the 2004 Legislative session, the Board wrote letters and testified in support of Substitute Senate Bill 5436, which subsequently passed. The bill mandates that each school district's Board of Directors establish its own nutrition/physical activity policy by August 1, 2005. In addition, the legislation charged several organizations with developing a model policy on access

to nutritious foods, opportunities for developmentally appropriate exercise, and accurate information related to these topics. The Washington State School Directors' Association is the lead agency and asked the Board staff and others to help develop and review the draft model policy. One goal of the community forum project is to help lay the groundwork in support of this legislation.

Today we will describe our efforts to date and what we have learned from the evaluation of the first three community forums. We will also share what we know about the outcomes of the first three community forums and the resources that have been identified as important in implementing the next phase of work for these communities.

I have invited Brooke Dubois and Annie Goodwin from Benton Franklin to come and tell you about their very successful community forum and the outcomes they expect as a result.

**Recommended Board Action**

None required at this time.